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Flux Laboratory,
Geneva

Mark Henley

'Bank on Us'

Photography Exhibit from November 23rd to December 21st, 2012
In collaboration for the first time with Flux Laboratory

Press Pack

‘Bank on Us’ / Photography Exhibit

Winner of the Swiss Press Photo Award 2012, British-born Mark Henley examines the world of Swiss banks. His photographs, in black and white, evoke the industry’s long history, as well as it’s present state of crisis, with the end of an era in sight. He plays upon the global myths of Swiss banking, plunging us into a world suggestive of spy thrillers, and film noir, in which secrets are common currency.

Mark Henley

Born in Oxford (1966), Henley studied literature at York, before finding himself in China during the tumult of 1989. He lived in Asia for ten years between Tokyo, Hong Kong and Beijing, seeing the Japanese bubble burst, Hong Kong handed back to China, and the rising of the latter to global power. He has photographed in over 50 countries over the last two decades, tracking global issues from Casablanca to Mexico City, Dar es Salaam to Jakarta, Moscow to Mumbai. His work has appeared in a great number of international magazines and newspapers, as well as being used by many organisations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and Amnesty International. His book and exhibition *China [sur]real*, after showing in Geneva at the BFM, toured throughout mainland China, testing the limits of subject becoming audience, confronting Chinese national pride, sexual taboos, political icons and generally outraging various provincial officials.

Bank on Us, which has won several awards in its various forms - including the Swiss Press Photo Award, is his first major project in Switzerland, examining issues close to home, in his adoptive country. Started at the beginning of 2010 the project continues. After six years in Zurich he now lives in Geneva. He is represented by Panos Pictures in London.

Artistic Statement

Bank on Us / A photo essay by Mark Henley

A two year project concerning an estimated \$7,000 billion institution with global reach and influence, now increasingly under pressure - the Swiss banking industry, currently holding just over a third of all global offshore assets. Losses, scandals, stolen CDs, the breeches of banking secrecy laws, continued pressure from the United States, combined with the apparent failure to negotiate agreements in Europe has placed enormous pressure on the industry, and banking secrecy itself is now in question. The work uses black and white to evoke the present sense of crisis, the long historical context, as well as the apparent end of an era that the sector is facing. It also acts as a means of suggesting ideas of secrecy, and referencing the Swiss banking world of global myth, of spy novels, thrillers and Hollywood films.

A first section of the work, concentrating on the major players UBS, Credit Suisse and the Swiss National Bank was published in late 2011, in Switzerland and internationally. An extract was awarded the Swiss Press Photo Award 2011/12, providing further publication in a wide range of Swiss newspapers and magazines. The project has continued in Geneva over the last year.

In collaboration for the first time with Flux Laboratory, in preparation for this exhibition, new work takes us behind the closed doors of Lombard Odier private bank, marking a further development in the project.

Press Review 'Bank on Us'

'An Orwellian work exploring banking secrecy'.

'With his images in black and white, echoing The Artist, the independent reporter brings both drama and pathos to his work on the financial sector ... Mark Henley plunges us into the secret world ... of banking secrecy'.

'His photographs darken our vision, take the breath away, and remind us that this is a grave era for the Swiss financial world, which holds a third of the world's (offshore) assets'.

Le Liberté 28/4/2012

'A great work .. a universe in black and white, charged with tension, reflections and protagonists in Chinese shadows ...'.

'The lack of access forced me to concentrate harder on how to create the right aesthetic. This black and white, which forces us to think, this atmosphere as from a thriller'.

Le Temps 19/10/2012

'The Aesthetics of the Invisible'.

'Money, Gold, and secrets ...The photograph that shows a man running through the rain in a suit looks like a silent tribute to the French grandmaster Henri Cartier-Bresson. Most importantly it symbolizes the deep crisis in which the local banking sector lies'.

'I thought I was photographing an institutional crisis, and finally found that I was probably photographing the end of an era'.

NZZ 25/07/2012

Flux Laboratory

FLUX Laboratory is an experimental meeting, performance and exhibition space operated as a members network, which shares the objectives and goals of the Fluxum Foundation, both in activity and spirit.

Flux Laboratory is a multi-faceted experimental space, which nurtures creative work and thinking through quality encounters with the arts, dance, science and health, technology, media, style and business.

Flux Laboratory gives a physical form to a constellation of innovative ideas and practical realities, creating a mix of events, which build bridges between creative thinkers and important players.

Practical Information

Flux Laboratory

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Opening hours

Monday to Friday 10am – 5pm or by appointment

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